AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace paragraph [0004] beginning on page 2 with the following amended paragraph.

[0004] In a conventional image processing apparatus, when a target pixel, i.e. a pixel currently subjected to processing, is judged to be a pixel in an edge area, the target pixel is enhanced by an enhancement amount that is determined in relation to pixels surrounding the target pixel within a predetermined area (hereinafter, this technique is referred to as "a first prior art technique"). Although this technique successfully sharpens boundaries, there is a problem as follows. That is, since the edge enhancement processing is to simply add an enhancement amount to each pixel in edge areas in an original image, when density variations originally exist ~~exit~~ in the edge areas, not only that the density variations remain even after the processing, but also that the density variations become even more noticeable.

Please replace paragraph [0053] beginning on page 12 with the following amended paragraph.

[0053] The flat area/edge area judgement unit 392 judges whether the pixel currently processed is a pixel in a density flat area or a pixel in an edge area. To be more specific, the average value La of each absolute value of Lm and Ls obtained by the primary differentiation [$La=(|Lm|+|Ls|/2)$], the thus obtained value La is compared with a predetermined threshold value Lth. When $La < Lth$, it is judged that the current pixel is a pixel in a density flat area, and when ~~La □ Lth~~ $La \geq Lth$, it is judged that the current pixel is an edge pixel.

Please replace the paragraph [0059] beginning on page 14 with the following amended paragraph.

[0059] $\Delta[[\square]]D_{33} = | D_{33}\text{-INT}\{D_{11} + D_{55} + D_{15} + D_{51}\}/4\}|$

wherein, INT { }: an integer of the calculation result

Please replace paragraph [0060] beginning on page 14 with the following amended paragraph.

[0060] That is to say, the enhancement amount Δ $[[\square]]D_{33}$ to be applied to the target pixel D_{33} is an absolute value of the difference in density between the target pixel D_{33} and the average of the four pixels D_{11}, D_{15}, D_{51}, and D_{55} that are two columns and two rows away vertically and horizontally (in the sub-scanning direction and the main scanning direction) from the target pixel D_{33}.

Please replace paragraph [0061] beginning on page 14 with the following amended paragraph.

[0061] The calculation result is inputted to the selector 382 through its input terminal B, while an input "0" is inputted through the other input terminal A at all times. The elector 382 selects either "0" or the enhancement amount Δ $[[\square]]D_{33}$ according to the edge signal inputted from the area judgment unit 390, and outputs whichever is selected through the output terminal Y. In other words, the selector 382 selects to output the enhancement amount Δ $[[\square]]D_{33}$ when the edge signal corresponding to the target pixel D_{33} is an ON signal, while selecting to output "0" when it is an OFF signal. This is done so because an enhancement amount is

applied only to an edge pixel, and also because the enhancement amount increasing unit 383 that follows uses only the enhancement amount of an edge pixel.

Please replace paragraph [0062] beginning on page 15 with the following amended paragraph.

[0062] The enhancement amount increasing unit 383 increases each enhancement amount inputted from the selector 382 as necessary using a MAX filter 3830 formed of 3 by 3 pixels as shown in FIG. 5B. That is, the greatest enhancement amount is selected from the enhancement amounts, including the enhancement amount $\underline{\Delta}$ [[□]]D_{33}, within an area that is one column and one row away vertically and horizontally from the target pixel (in the sub-scanning direction and the main scanning direction). The enhancement amount $\underline{\Delta}$ [[□]]D_{33} is then replaced with the thus selected enhancement amount. The result of this processing equally means that the enhancement amount of the target pixel is increased by the difference with the greatest enhancement amount found within the range of 3 by 3 pixels. Accordingly, the increased enhancement amount of each pixel obtained through the above processing as a whole involves smaller variations compared ~~compare~~ to the enhancements amounts without such increase.

Please replace paragraph [0064] beginning on page 16 with the following amended paragraph.

[0064] The enhancement amount having been processed by the enhancement amount increasing unit 383 is inputted to the selector 384 through its input terminal B, while an input "0" is inputted through the other imput terminal A at

all times. Similar to the selector 382 described above, the selector 384 selects either "0" or the increased enhancement amount $\underline{\Delta}$ [[□]]D_{33} and outputs whichever is selected through the output terminal Y. In other words, the selector 384 selects to output the increased enhancement amount $\underline{\Delta}$ [[□]]D_{33} when the edge signal corresponding to the target pixel D33 is an ON signal, while selecting to output "0" when it is an OFF signal. This is done so because the edge enhancement processing unit conducts enhancement processing (increase in density) only on edge pixels.